of ensuring that this heavily subsidized product is actually made available in the required quantities at subsidized price to the intended beneficiaries; and secondly, to thus cap, reverse and eventually eliminate the diversion of PDS kerosene for adulteration. One of the salient features of this scheme is that supplies to the sub-wholesale points will the made under the direct supervision and responsibility of the public sector OMCs. The scheme has been launched on a pilot basis in 414 blocks including 10 blocks in Jharkhand in the country from 2nd October, 2005. The pilot scheme has been further extended upto 30.6.2007.

(iii) With a view to checking diversion of subsidized kerosene and in order to monitor the movement of Tank Trucks transporting petroleum products, the Government have advised the public sector OMCs for installing Global Positioning System (GPS) based vehicle tracking system on all the tank trucks by 31.03.2007. The essential features of the system is that the vehicle carrying PDS SKO is fitted with a device and can be tracked on real time basis from the time it leaves the supply location and till it reaches the destination.

(iv) To check adulteration in auto fuels, and also to check diversion of subsidized kerosene. Public sector OMCs have commenced introduction of marker in kerosene on all India basis with effect from 1.10.2006. Under the new system, Market is being put in kerosene in all depots. This system heralds the introduction of world-class technology to curb and eventually eliminate the menace of adulteration of transportation fuels along the supply chain. Oil marketing Companies in the Private sector have also been simultaneously asked to introduce marker in kerosene as is being done by Public Sector OMCs.

Shortage of LPG

831. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country has been experiencing acute shortage of LPG supplies across the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are aware that the subsidized LPG cylinders meant for domestic purposes are being largely diverted for commercial purposes; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) At present, there is no overall shortage of LPG in the country and LPG supplies to distributors are being made by the Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) through indigenous production and imports in accordance with the genuine demand of customers registered with the LPG distributors. However, OMCs have reported a backlog of two-five days in the State of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal and Maharashtra due to disruption in supplies on account of restricted movement of vehicles during Ardh Kumbh Mela, less input at Haldia port due to reduced draft, reduced production at Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL's) fractionator at Vijayapur and disruption in pumping of LPG through pipelines. Government has advised OMCs to liquidate the backlog in these States by operating the bottling plants on holidays and during extended hours.

(c) and (d) OMCs have reported instances of diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes by their LPG distributors. In addition to the action taken by the OMCs under the Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG), State Governments are empowered to take action against illegal use of domestic LPG.

The following measuring have been taken to prevent the diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes:

(i) Under the LPG (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000 promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 the diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes by the distributors of OMCs is prohibited. The State Governments are empowered to take action against erring distributors under the provisions of this Order. The State Governments have been alerted from time to time to take steps against the diversion of domestic cylinders for unauthorized usage.

(ii) The officials of OMCs carry out random checks at distributors godown, delivery point, as well as en-route to ensure that no

diversion/black marketing takes place. In terms of the MDG, in case of establishment of any diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinder for commercial purposes, the following action is taken against the distributor:—

Fine of Rs. 20,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 1st offence.

Fine of Rs. 50,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 2nd offence, and

Termination of the distributorship for 3rd offence.

(iii) Government have advised OMCs to introduce different colours for domestic and non-domestic clyliners. This is expected to help in controlling the diversion of domestic LPG for unauthorized use.

Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project

832. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is expected to sign a $145 billion deal with Iran in June to import natural gas *via* the controversial 2,135 km. pipeline that will run through Pakistan.

(b) whether it is also a fact that by the time the gas reaches Indo-Pakistan border, the gas will be very expensive as India will be paying Pakistan $ 800 million in transit fees and $ 100 million to the Pakistan Army to guard the pipeline; and

(c) if so, the reasons for signing such as expensive deal when we have the option of importing gas by sea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) The 4th Tripartite Joint Working Group meeting of Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project between the three countries was held in Tehran, Iran on January 24-25, 2007. During the meeting, discussions were held on the report submitted by International consultant M/s. Gaffney Cline & Associates on the gas price at Iran-Pakistan border. A gas pricing formula regarding pricing of gas at Iran-Pakistan border was agreed between Iran and Pakistan